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PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001

Programme 7. Economic and social information and policy analysis

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
Programme 7. Economic and social information and policy analysis	7.1 - 7.10	2
Subprogramme:		
7.1 Statistics	7.4 - 7.5	3
7.2 Population	7.6 - 7.7	4
7.3 Global development trends, issues and policies	7.8	5
7.4 Global approaches to social and micro-economic issues and policies	7.9 - 7.10	5

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7.1 The general orientation of this programme is the promotion of an integrated approach to economic, social and environmental aspects of development, including the elaboration of perspectives that will provide for sustainable, equitable and participatory development. The programme will also develop and promote a coordinated approach to key policy issues. To that end, the programme will assist Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and others interested in determining development priorities at the international, national and local levels, and will contribute to devising policies and measures aimed at fulfilling them. The programme seeks to achieve this primarily by contributing to knowledge and understanding of development processes and of the consequences of the actions of different participants in those processes.

7.2 The mandate for the programme lies in the responsibilities entrusted to the Secretariat by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and certain of its subsidiary bodies for the elaboration of economic and social information, for the analysis of development issues, trends and policies, and for the execution of technical cooperation activities in certain of those areas. More specifically, the mandate derives from General Assembly resolutions 118 (II) of 31 October 1947, 3362 (S-VII) of 16 September 1975, 32/197 of 20 December 1977, 39/228 of 18 December 1984, 45/264 of 13 May 1991 and 46/235 of 13 April 1992; relevant parts of the programmes of action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women; and Economic and Social Council resolutions 8 (I), 9 (II) and 3 (III). The responsibility for the implementation of this programme is assigned to the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis.

7.3 By the end of the period covered by the plan, the programme would have accomplished the following:

(a) Developed and increased the dissemination of statistical concepts and methods and new statistical data-processing technologies;

(b) Improved the collection, compilation and dissemination of economic, social and population information;

(c) Elaborated estimates and projections and identified and analysed emerging economic and social issues;

(d) Analysed long-term development issues, including the relationships between the social and economic dimensions and between population and development;

(e) Monitored and assessed, from a global perspective, economic and social developments, policies and problems, in particular those relating to international cooperation, and provided alternative policy approaches to some of the issues confronting the international community;

(f) Provided technical cooperation in the foregoing areas of competence;

(g) Enhanced the synergies within the Department and strengthened cooperation with other related programmes.

Subprogramme 7.1 Statistics

7.4 The subprogramme, for which the Statistical Division is responsible, will focus on five main objectives during the period covered by the plan, as follows:

(a) Over the years, the subprogramme has contributed to the significant progress in the international collection, standardization, analysis and dissemination of economic, social and related data. The first objective is to improve the usefulness and accessibility of international economic and social data to policy makers, both international and national. The availability of international statistics and their usefulness for policy purposes will be broadened and their quality enhanced. For example, given the increasing globalization of the world economy, an increasing number of decision makers at all levels will require data on international transactions. Accordingly, an essential task of the subprogramme will be to sustain the function of the United Nations as a global centre for data on international trade. The same will apply to systems dedicated to environment, energy, transport, national accounts and demographic and social statistics;

(b) A milestone was passed with the finalization of the 1993 System of National Accounts. The objective now is to expand the number of countries that are in a position to implement the new System. To achieve this objective, the Secretariat, in close collaboration with other international organizations, will continue to improve economic statistics in general and to promote the System in particular, including through training and other forms of technical cooperation;

(c) Agenda 21 calls for the development and implementation of integrated environmental and economic accounting and indicators of sustainable development in order to provide the information necessary to formulate policies and strategies for sustainable development at the national and international levels. A third objective will be to improve the international community's ability to measure the environmental impact of human activity and expenditures related to the environment. The subprogramme will address relevant concepts and methods in order to obtain international agreement on their use and usefulness, as well as compile environmental statistics, indicators and accounts;

(d) The World Summit for Social Development and the other global conferences held recently have highlighted the need for more and better statistics to describe and monitor progress in the human dimensions of development. A fourth objective will be to develop and promote the use of consistent and integrated sets of social statistics (including, in particular, demographic, housing, gender and disability statistics), to develop social indicators and to enhance analytical capabilities in this area.

7.5 The subprogramme will also continue to emphasize the coordination and development of international statistical standards across a broad spectrum of statistics.

Subprogramme 7.2 Population

7.6 Population, with its various dimensions, is one of the major challenges confronting the international community. To address that challenge, the subprogramme, for which the Population Division is responsible, will aim at increasing the understanding of the nature of population phenomena, in particular, the interrelationships between population and development, and at providing technical cooperation in population. This increased understanding and knowledge will facilitate the work of the Economic and Social Council, through the Commission on Population and Development, in the substantive coordination of activities of the United Nations system in the field of population and the formulation of policy recommendations.

7.7 The objectives of this subprogramme are as follows:

(a) To expand the leading role of the Department (i) in providing accurate and timely information and analyses of population trends and policies, and (ii) in monitoring and reporting on substantive elements of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development;

(b) In order to formulate policy, Governments need information on population trends and their interrelationships with social and economic development. To that end, the subprogramme will facilitate the access by Governments to information on population trends and their interrelationships with social and economic development as an input to policy formulation through the preparation of the official United Nations demographic estimates and projections for all countries and areas of the world, as well as urban and rural areas and major cities. Those estimates and projections provide the standard and consistent sets of population figures that are used throughout the United Nations system as the basis for activities requiring population information;

(c) The far-reaching consequences of population phenomena and their interrelationships with social and economic development are giving rise to increasing demands by countries and regions for relevant population information and analyses. A third objective will be to increase the understanding of the social, economic and other factors that will affect mortality, fertility, migration and population growth, and how population change, in turn, affects the social, economic and environmental conditions of people;

(d) Rapidly changing international demographic conditions, such as the AIDS pandemic, and new developments on such issues as international migration, call for innovative strategies and policies at both the national and international levels. To that end, the subprogramme will increase awareness about emerging population issues requiring the attention of the international community;

(e) Another objective of the subprogramme is to increase Member States' capacity to formulate national population and related policies for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and to improve their institutional capabilities for the collection and analysis of national population information.

Subprogramme 7.3 Global development trends, issues and policies

7.8 The overall purpose of the subprogramme, for which the Macroeconomic Division is responsible, will be to assist the international community in identifying emerging challenges and addressing persistent problems in global development. The subprogramme will enhance understanding of international economic and social issues and problems, contribute to improving national and international policies in this area and facilitate the exploration of new forms of international cooperation for development. More specifically, the subprogramme will focus on three main objectives, as follows:

(a) To promote development and foster international economic cooperation through the exploration of national and international policy options. This will be achieved by monitoring and assessing, from a global perspective, economic and social developments and policies, especially those with an international dimension. Work will focus on issues of adjustment and structural change in the developing countries, including their implications for economic growth and development, and on the economic and social transformation of the countries with economies in transition, including their integration into the world economy. It will also address the macroeconomic performance and policies of the industrialized countries and their effects on the world economy;

(b) External debt and finance for development will remain important issues on the global agenda. A second objective will be to increase awareness of the changing nature, volume and direction of international financial flows, propose ways and means to enhance and stabilize both official and private finance, monitor changes in the external debt situation and identify innovative approaches and strategies to resolve the difficulties of countries with debt-servicing problems;

(c) Economic policy-making at the national and international levels is predicated on the availability of up-to-date assessments of major development prospects and the presentation of alternative scenarios. A third objective will be to assist Member States and intergovernmental bodies in the early identification of new and emerging issues in the world economy by providing short-term economic forecasts and perspective studies of long-term global trends in economic and social development.

Subprogramme 7.4 Global approaches to social and micro-economic issues and policies

7.9 The international policy dialogues of the early 1990s on development issues and actions, in particular, the global conferences, gave rise to progress and change in development thinking. They focused attention to the non-economic dimensions of development, highlighted the different contributions of individual agents (people, private enterprises and non-governmental organizations, as well as central and local government) to the development process and underlined the role of market forces in development. In addition, the end of the cold war gave a new focus to the interactions between the political and economic dimensions of the Secretariat's work, for example on such issues as the effects of sanctions.

7.10 The subprogramme, for which the Micro-economic and Social Analysis Division is responsible, will focus on three main objectives, as follows:

(a) To improve the capability of Governments to decide on the role of markets in national efforts to increase efficiency, sustainable economic growth and distributional equity. The subprogramme will undertake policy-oriented analyses of both the potential and shortcomings of market solutions to problems of allocation, distribution and regulation, in particular, with regard to the provision of public goods and services, at the national and international levels;

(b) To enable the world community to respond to persistent problems and emerging issues in socio-economic development. The subprogramme will undertake integrated analyses of global patterns, trends and prospects in socio-economic development and of their implications for strategies at the national and international levels. This will include examination of the role of economic and social institutions and policy instruments, in particular, those designed to avoid the marginalization of segments of society and to promote social integration;

(c) To assist the international community in analysing the linkages between political and economic issues and policies. One group of such issues is the impact of multilateral sanctions, notably those imposed by the Security Council, and of coercive economic measures on both target countries and third States. Another area, which forms part of the Organization's broader effort to arrest and mitigate the consequences of fragmentation within countries, will be to provide economic and social analysis and policy proposals regarding post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation of crisis-stricken areas.

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Programme 8. Development support and management services

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
Programme 8. Development support and management services	8.1 - 8.8	2
Subprogrammes:		
8.1 Public administration and development management ...	8.5 - 8.6	3
8.2 Environment and social development management	8.7 - 8.8	4

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8.1 The overall orientation of the programme, which is under the responsibility of the Department for Development Support and Management Services, is to enhance and support, through technical cooperation, the national efforts of Member States, in particular developing countries and the least developed among them, as well as economies in transition, to build their human and institutional capabilities and infrastructures to formulate and effectively implement economic and social policies that will contribute to sustainable, people-centred development and the eradication of poverty. To this end, the programme makes available to developing countries and economies in transition substantive knowledge and know-how in public administration and finance, economic and social policy and planning, and natural resources and energy planning and management.

8.2 The programme promotes, within the context of national needs and priorities, the development of programmes and projects for national execution aimed at strengthening national human, institutional and policy-making capabilities. In so doing, the programme also takes into account the outcomes and commitments of relevant United Nations conferences, in particular the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Summit on Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as the outcome of the resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly on public administration and development. Through its activities, the programme represents a crucial interface between global policies and national action, serving as a catalyst for action-oriented national and community programmes and projects that integrate sectoral measures in coherent, multisectoral strategies. As circumstances require, the programme's expertise in its areas of specialization will continue to be made available to support United Nations reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in countries in post-conflict situations in cooperation with other United Nations funds and programmes.

8.3 The mandate for the programme derives from General Assembly resolution 47/212 B of 6 May 1993. The programme is also guided by Assembly resolutions 44/211 of 22 December 1989 and 47/199 of 22 December 1992, on operational activities for development, and resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996, on public administration and development.

8.4 By the end of the period covered by the plan, it is expected that the programme will have achieved the following:

(a) Built up or strengthened institutional, human resources, managerial and policy planning capacities in developing countries and economies in transition;

(b) Expanded the dissemination to Governments of the lessons of international and national experience in the Department's spheres of competence;

(c) Enhanced cooperation with other United Nations departments, as well as regional economic commissions, organizations, funds, programmes, United Nations system development financing institutions and non-governmental organizations, in the development of joint activities at the country level to ensure common efforts towards promoting sustainable development in accordance with national needs and priorities;

(d) Provided substantive contributions based on the programme's practical country experiences in its areas of specialization for international policy discussion.

Subprogramme 8.1 Public administration and development management

8.5 Developments in public administration have been influenced in recent years by fundamental changes, including technological advances, global economic interdependence, aggravation of social problems and the growing importance of the private sector. In this changed global context, several Governments are attempting to redirect the role of the State to that of policy management and monitoring and the creation of an enabling environment. There is also growing demand to involve citizens in the decision-making process and for public administration to be more transparent, accountable and responsive to citizens' needs and demands.

8.6 The objectives of the subprogramme, which is implemented by the Division of Public Administration and Development Management, are:

(a) To facilitate intergovernmental dialogue on available approaches, systems and methods in public administration and to identify new and emerging issues through the establishment of a clearing-house mechanism and ensuring the collection and analysis of experiences, in particular best practices, and facilitating dissemination of such information;

(b) To mobilize other actors in the area of public administration and development management, such as global and regional professional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academic institutions, to provide support to and to participate in United Nations activities in this field;

(c) To assist Governments, at their request, in strengthening their capacity for policy development, administrative restructuring, civil service reform, human resources development and public administration training; improving performance in the public sector; increasing public/private sector interaction; managing development programmes; and enhancing government legal capacity;

(d) To assist Governments, at their request, in developing the necessary capabilities to enable public administration to implement the commitments agreed upon at major United Nations conferences in an effective and coordinated manner, ensuring the maintenance of essential basic government services and functions during times of crisis and developing strategies for rebuilding a viable public administration in countries undergoing post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction;

(e) To broaden Governments' resource mobilization and revenue administration capacities, enhance the efficiency and performance of tax administration and improve financial management skills in budgeting systems and techniques, accounting and auditing;

(f) To enhance national capacity for economic and social development, including the strengthening of relevant institutional, human resources, policy-analysis and policy-making infrastructure in developing countries and economies in transition;

(g) To improve planning, coordination and management of external financial and technical assistance available to Governments within their overall development priorities and their need for technical assistance;

(h) To promote and enhance the dissemination of public sector information systems for economic analysis and financial management by developing computer-based management information systems dealing with policy analysis and macroeconomic issues.

Subprogramme 8.2 Environment and social development management

8.7 The excessive use of natural resources in many areas, as well as the growth of poverty over broad geographical areas, pose a grave threat to the global environment, undermining possibilities of attaining sustainable development. A national commitment to sustainable development, in line with the principles articulated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, requires promotion of the use of renewable resources and efforts to use non-renewable resources more rationally. It may mean changing consumption patterns to increase the use of products and production processes that have the least adverse impact on the environment. In many countries, strategies need to be defined and policies formulated to contend simultaneously with poverty, resource degradation and post-conflict reconstruction requirements.

8.8 The subprogramme, which is implemented by the Division for Environment Management and Social Development, provides assistance in conceptualizing, formulating and implementing action-oriented, people-centred programmes at the national level emphasizing the interface between natural resources, environmental management and social development through operational projects and substantive contributions to relevant global conferences and intergovernmental bodies. The objectives of the subprogramme are to assist Governments and communities, at their request, as follows:

(a) To devise operational strategies that promote sustainable use of natural resources and equitable social development. These include reformulation of policies governing the use of natural resources and energy and production processes that have the least adverse impact on the environment;

(b) To formulate cross-sectoral strategies and programmes to enable Governments and local communities to improve economic and social conditions among vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities, women, youth and the elderly, especially in the context of post-conflict and post-disaster rehabilitation. Such strategies will include measures to expand community access to credit in rural areas and institutional assistance to income-generating artisanal industries and other small enterprises based on reliable access to energy, water and other natural resources particularly in the least developed countries;

(c) To strengthen the institutional, human resources and policy-making capabilities of Governments and communities in order to foster the effective planning and management of natural resources; to promote an iterative and multisectoral approach to water resources management that integrates technological, socio-economic, environmental and human health considerations and involves local initiatives and participation in such development efforts; and to formulate policies on mineral resources that encourage environmentally sound production practices;

(d) To promote the use of modern surveying and mapping techniques as a tool for infrastructure and land-use planning for sustainable development, including assistance to various cartographic, cadastral and hydrographic services at the national and local levels;

(e) To strengthen the institutional capacity of Governments and communities for the development, utilization and commercialization of new and renewable energy sources; to develop national and indigenous capacity in assessment and management of energy resources and services; to introduce changes in energy consumption patterns, focusing on conservation measures and demand-side management; to facilitate international and interregional connections for the transmission of electric power and transport of natural gas; and to promote technology transfer to different levels of government, civil society, community institutions and entrepreneurs.